



Congressman

John M. McHugh

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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OPENING STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE JOHN M. McHUGH
CHAIRMAN, SPECIAL OVERSIGHT PANEL ON MORALE, WELFARE, AND RECREATION

MWR PANEL HEARING ON THE MWR SYSTEM

April 10, 1997

The purpose of today's hearing is to receive an overview of the military's MWR system—the programs and activities established by the Department of Defense that perform several functions crucial to the readiness of our military forces.

MWR programs frequently do not receive the notoriety that the military resale system receives. These programs for the most part do not generate significant amounts of revenue, and they certainly do not have established, influential political constituencies to the same extent as commissaries and exchanges. However, in many respects these programs are, if anything, more important to the well being and readiness of our forces. These programs promote physical fitness, establish a sense of community for service members and their families, particularly at remote installations and isolated areas, and are perhaps the most tangible evidence that the military cares about quality of life for its people. In wartime or during deployments, MWR programs are essential to providing recreation and relief from stress for service members enduring hardships away from home. MWR activities may not get much recognition in the media or from business interests, but in a very real sense they are the guts of quality of life for our military personnel and their families.

For these reasons, it is imperative that these programs be well managed and soundly financed. If physical fitness centers are not open enough hours to permit our troops to use them fully, or if child care centers are located in dilapidated buildings where people don't feel comfortable bringing their children, or if officer and enlisted clubs have to be closed because poor management has caused them to lose money, it is clear that quality of life, morale and, ultimately, force readiness will suffer.

As we continue our efforts to balance the federal budget, there will be increased pressure for many MWR programs to generate more revenue and to become self-sustaining. There will also be pressure to reduce appropriated fund support for these activities. Such pressures will put a premium on the department's ability to

both manage these programs smartly and fully resource them. I want to assure everyone that the MWR Panel and I as chairman will do whatever we can to ensure that the services' MWR programs are adequately financed and operated so that quality of life for service members and their families and the MWR benefit are preserved.

With those thoughts in mind, let me welcome our witnesses at today's hearing—Fred Pang, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Force Management Policy; Brigadier General Evan Gaddis, Commander of the Army's Community and Family Support Center; Rear Admiral Larry Marsh, Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Personnel Readiness and Community Support; Mr. Arthur Myers, Deputy Director of Services and Director of Resource Management and Oversight at the Air Force's Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Installations and Logistics; and Mr. Michael Tharrington, Acting Director of the Marine Corps' Morale, Welfare and Recreation Support Activity. I look forward to your testimony.